



CITIZENS' FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD PROGRAM
ANNUAL REPORT
2003 and 2004



The children pictured on this cover are available for adoption.
Please contact the **Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange** (MARE) at 1-800-589-6273.

Welcome to the Foster Care Review Board Annual Report. This report summarizes issues raised by our citizen volunteers as they review over 2,500 foster care cases from throughout Michigan. Their purpose is two-fold. They provide feedback, from the perspective of citizen volunteers, on whether progress is being made toward achieving a safe and permanent home for children in Michigan's foster care system. In addition, they collect data on these cases to identify the barriers to achieving permanency. This annual report is one way FCRB uses the data and their observations to educate the courts, our legislature, and other policy makers on issues pertaining to children in the foster care system.

This year, the report is built around four themes that have continued to pose barriers to permanency for children in foster care. The report speaks to concerns related to case service plans, caseloads and staff turnover, permanent wards and "aging out," and parental barriers. The report also summarizes the work of the Child Welfare Services Division of the State Court Administrative Office. FCRB is part of the Child Welfare Services Division. As the report indicates, the Child Welfare Services Division has been active in a variety of ways to address systemic issues in child welfare and to work collaboratively with other state departments to provide training and other support for attorneys, advocates, volunteers and service providers.

I would like to commend the efforts of Justice Maura Corrigan, my predecessor as Chief Justice, for the work she has done to raise the issues of child welfare as a priority in the State Court Administrative Office. Her commitment and passion for the concerns of children who come to the attention of the courts because they have been abused or neglected resulted in the creation of the Child Welfare Services Division within SCAO. We are pleased with the work of the Division and the attention being brought to some of Michigan's most vulnerable citizens. Justice Corrigan's work has provided the foundation for our work on these issues for years to come.

Please feel free to contact our FCRB or Child Welfare Services Division staff with any questions you may have as you review this annual report.



Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clifford W. Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DIVISION AND THE FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD

In 2003, the Child Welfare Services Division (CWS), which includes the Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) and the Court Improvement Program (CIP), was established within the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO). The purpose of the Division is to develop a stronger focus, within SCAO and the State, on issues that bring children to the attention of Michigan's Courts.

As Chief Justice Taylor notes in his welcoming statement, in addition to FCRB and CIP, the Division has been active in a variety of ways to work collaboratively with other state departments on children's issues. This year, the FCRB annual report reflects the collaborative work of the FCRB with CWS.

The annual report contains two sections. The first covers the issues and recommendations that have emerged from the work of the 30 FCRB Boards. The second section provides an overview of CWS, which shows the significant role FCRB plays in the policy efforts of the Division.

FCRB MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Foster Care Review Board is to utilize citizen volunteers to review and evaluate permanency planning processes and outcomes for children and families in the Michigan foster care system. Based on the data collected through case reviews, the Foster Care Review Board advocates for systemic improvements in areas of child safety, timely permanency, and family and child well-being.

FCRB VISION STATEMENT

The Foster Care Review Board will be viewed and valued by the courts, the Department of Human Services (DHS), private child-placing agencies, the legislature, and the citizens of Michigan as a major source of credible data on the performance of the child welfare system in Michigan. Additionally, the citizens will use the data to shape public policy and promote awareness regarding the child foster care system.

The FCRB program is comprised of local residents who meet once a month to review cases of abused or neglected children in foster care. The FCRB Advisory Committee is a collaborative body of representatives from each local board along with individuals from the child welfare community. The data presented in the annual report, along with the recommendations, are the product of this collaborative effort and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Michigan Supreme Court or the State Court Administrative Office under whose auspices this Program is conducted.

The data presented in this report is provided from a statewide perspective. For citizens and advocates interested in local or regional information, please contact the FCRB Program Representative for your area. Contact information and geographic responsibility for Program Representatives can be found on the back page of this report.

INTRODUCTION

The annual report is an opportunity to detail the efforts of the FCRB and to share with Michigan's policymakers some of the systemic issues that citizen volunteers see as they review foster care cases throughout the State. The recommendations raised in this report are based on these reviews.¹

The central focus of foster care reviews is to assess plans for permanency and care of children in foster care. Is there a clear plan to achieve permanency? Do the parents and all parties to the case understand their responsibilities and are all making reasonable efforts to achieve the plan? Are children safe and their needs being met while in the foster care system?

Each of the 30 boards that comprise Michigan's Foster Care Review Board system uses a structured format to gather the information needed to assess those core issues of permanency for children in care. For every review, a Findings and Recommendations Report is done and is shared with all parties involved with the case. The FCRB reports provide case specific feedback to the courts, attorneys, foster care and service providers from the perspective of impartial, well-trained citizen volunteers. However, with each review, the Board also considers whether the case issues contain examples of broader systemic concerns.

The process for developing the annual report begins with aggregating and analyzing data collected throughout the state during the year. Each year the annual report provides information on matters such as the number of cases reviewed, the number and percentage of cases where the FCRB agrees with the permanency plans, and the kinds of permanency plans that are achieved. In addition, an assessment of the barriers to permanency is done and the most prevalent barriers to achieving permanency are identified for both temporary and permanent wards. The barriers to permanency are discussed and analyzed by FCRB staff, local Boards and the Advisory Committee to FCRB.² Through this process, the issues that form the most pronounced barriers to achieving permanency are identified and recommendations to address them are developed. In recent years, the annual report has featured an issue of particular concern to the FCRB, such as the amount of staff turnover of private agency foster care workers and concerns related to Lawyer-Guardian Ad Litem representation of children in care.

In reviewing the FCRB annual reports, over the past several years, it is clear that there are core issues that have been raised in one form or another year-in and year-out. While progress has been made on many issues, there still remain fundamental concerns that warrant continued attention. This annual report is developed around four themes that have been identified through an analysis of past annual FCRB reports and other efforts³ to assess issues in Michigan's child welfare system. The discussion of each of these themes will include a description of problems that continue to be seen, current efforts and progress toward addressing issues, and recommendations. In many instances, the recommendations made in this report will restate recommendations made in prior annual reports based on the need for continued attention to the matter.

¹ Each year 2,500 to 3,500 cases are reviewed to identify systemic issues that create barriers to achieving permanency for children in foster care.

² The FCRB Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives from each of the 30 Boards with additional representation from the courts and policymakers from within the child welfare system.

³ Other reports reviewed include the Coleman Commission Report (1984); the Binsfeld Commission on Adoption (1993); the Binsfeld Children's Commission (1996); the Children and the Law Report of the State Bar of Michigan (1995); and the Report of Representative Hager's Special Committee on Child Welfare (2000).

2003 & 2004 ANNUAL REPORT ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

CASE SERVICE PLANS

► Issues

- Parents don't always have input into the Case Service Plan.
- Case Service Plans aren't always written with sufficient specificity so that parents are clear about expectations.

► Recommendations

- The recommendations on case service plans address quality improvement of the plans; the issue of needs assessments early on in a case; the need to monitor the Department of Human Services (DHS) "Family to Family" initiative as it moves statewide; and the need for uniform standards for service plans to better assure continuity of service when workers change. (Page 9)

CASELOADS AND STAFF TURNOVER

► Issues

- There continues to be a high rate of turnover in foster care workers in Michigan. Turnover causes delays in the implementation of service plans and court hearings, and adds stress to workers who must handle additional workload until new people are hired and trained.
- A private agency survey identified salary, hours, caseload size and workload stress as reasons for leaving.
- There is a significant difference in salary and benefits between private agency foster care workers and DHS employees.

► Recommendations

- Caseload and staff turnover recommendations point to the need to continue to monitor caseload ratios and to take the necessary steps to assure that foster care receives sufficient funding to adequately perform casework. The issue of worker stress is addressed. The recommendations also speak to the disparity in salary and benefits between private agency foster care workers and employees of the State. (Page 11)

PERMANENT WARDS

► Issues

(Permanent wards are children in foster care after parental rights have been terminated, with no finalized permanency plan.)

- The number of permanent wards has risen steadily since the implementation of changes in the law in 1997—from 3,800 in 1997 to over 6,200 in 2004.
- It is much more difficult to find adoptive homes, or to establish other permanency plans, for older children in the foster care system. (Chart on page 12)
- The two barriers to permanency for permanent wards, most often identified by the FCRB, are placement issues and issues related to the child.

► Recommendations

- Permanent ward recommendations speak to the need to improve services for children aging out of the child welfare system; to post-termination court proceedings; and to the ways in which cases transition from foster care to adoption. (Page 15)

MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

► Issues

- The most prevalent barriers to permanency for temporary wards are those related to parental issues. Among the parental issues, three of the most challenging are concerns related to substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence.
- Successful treatment of substance abuse does not always happen within the time frame that the courts and the child welfare system have established for child abuse or neglect cases.
- Timely and high quality services are not consistently available throughout the State to address substance abuse and mental health issues.
- Victims of domestic violence often confront difficult challenges as they weigh options for their own safety and seek to protect their children.

► Recommendations

- The recommendations on mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence focus on the need for training and professional development for foster care, protective services, and other service providers, and for greater inter-departmental coordination of effort and collaboration to improve the availability of services. (Page 18)

CASE SERVICE PLANS

Statement of the Issues: Among the top 10 barriers to permanency identified by FCRB in the cases reviewed in 2003 and 2004, two were directly related to case service plan issues: *(1) parental non-compliance with case service plans; (2) case service plans that appear inappropriate or not feasible.*

Excerpt From Michigan's DHS Foster Care Manual

Casework service requires the engagement of the family in development of the service plan. This means an open conversation between all parents/guardians and the foster care worker in:

- ▶ discussing needs and strengths
- ▶ establishing the service plan
- ▶ reaching an understanding of what is entailed in meeting the goals of the service plan.

For every child protection case that comes before the court, a case service plan is developed. The initial plan is presented to the court and contains a plan to address the issues that led to removal of children from their home. Ideally, the plan is developed with input from the parents and has clear and measurable goals that if obtained will culminate with the return of children to their parents.

There are two issues related to case service plans that have been raised time and again. The first is that, too often,

there is no indication that the parents have had any meaningful input in the development of the case service plan. Child welfare professionals agree that compliance with the terms of case service plans is improved when parents understand and “buy in” to what is expected of them. Further, if parents participate in developing the plan, there is a greater likelihood that the expectations are realistic. It should also be noted that the Child and Family Services Review Final Report (discussed more fully on page 20 of this report), prepared by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, identified the lack of parental involvement in case planning as significant. The report indicated that in thirty percent of the cases they reviewed, DHS had not made diligent efforts to involve the parents and/or children in the case planning process, despite policy that requires the family to be involved.

The second case service plan issue, identified by FCRB, is that outcomes aren't always clearly articulated in ways that parents understand the behavioral change that is expected of them. For example, boards often review cases where the plan will state that parents are to attend a parenting skill class or a session to address domestic violence. Problems result when there is no clear description of the expected behavioral or attitudinal changes. The court's capacity to do a meaningful case review is thwarted if the quarterly reviews merely state that the parent has or hasn't attended the class. Parents can become frustrated when they attend the classes as required, but later learn that reunification is not being recommended because the foster care worker has not seen the kinds of changes that would ensure safety of the child.

In cases where either or both of the above issues are present, a clear barrier to moving toward permanency exists. It is an issue that, if properly attended to at the beginning of a case, can be significantly minimized.

TOP 10 BARRIERS TO PERMANENCY

1. Lack of insight into problems
2. Substance abuse problems
3. Parental non-compliance with case service plan; parents resistant/uncooperative to service intervention
4. Ward behavior
5. Inadequate/inappropriate housing
6. Lack of judgment (vulnerability to inappropriate influence of others/peers)
7. Low functioning parents (limited abilities, lack of coping skills)
8. Plan inappropriate (does not appear feasible based on documentation)
9. Parental inability/unwillingness to protect child
10. Chronic mental illness

Progress On the Issues: There are several efforts underway to address case service plan issues. Strategies are planned to improve the level of parental involvement and to link services more closely to the assessments of parent's issues.

- ▶ **“Family to Family”:** DHS has piloted the “Family to Family” model in selected communities and is now in the process of establishing the model statewide. One of the core values of the “Family to Family” initiative is to involve parents in case planning and goal-setting from the onset of intervention. Parents are involved in a team decision meeting, and other family members and interested parties are sought out and involved in the process, as well.
- ▶ **Absent Parent Protocol:** CWS has developed an Absent Parent Protocol (APP). During the past year, DHS has worked closely with SCAO to finalize the document and to improve the coordination of effort between the courts, the Office of Child Support (OCS), and DHS. DHS intends to use the APP as a tool to improve inclusion of fathers in the case planning process.
- ▶ **Face to Face Meetings with Parents:** DHS has amended its state policy regarding face to face meetings with parents. The purpose of the change is to stress the importance of engaging the family early on in the case. The amended policy provides more guidance for the face to face meetings, including a focus on the family assessment of needs and strengths and the case service plan.
- ▶ **Case Reviews and Supervisory Training:** DHS is working with Michigan State University and the University of Michigan to develop a new training curriculum for supervisors. One of the key goals identified is to teach skills related to supervising the case planning process. In addition, DHS is instituting a statewide case review process. One of the goals of the reviews is to identify best practices in Michigan relative to engagement of children and families in case planning.

CASE SERVICE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that DHS follow through with the plans identified above in the “progress on the issues” section that will improve both the quality of case service plans and the involvement of parents.
2. We recommend DHS increase efforts to engage, when appropriate, mental health professionals in the initial case service plans to ensure that parental emotional and cognitive challenges are addressed.
3. We recommend that the implementation of the “Family to Family” initiative be closely monitored by DHS to assess whether “Family to Family” staff have the training and community support necessary to ensure the fidelity of the model.
4. We recommend that DHS ensure private agency foster care workers be provided the same training and support related to case service planning available to DHS staff.
5. We recommend that DHS establish uniform quality control standards in policy for updated services plans, to ensure that each case service provider has a clear and concise understanding of the course and progress of the case.

CASELOADS AND STAFF TURNOVER

Statement of the Issues: The role of the foster care caseworker is critical to all efforts in a child protection case. Successful caseworkers are effective communicators and resourceful advocates for the families they serve. They know the impact that abuse and neglect can have on the emotional well-being of children. They have learned how to draw the line between being supportive versus creating unhealthy dependent relationships. They know how to gain access to the services in their communities. They understand the legal framework within which child protection cases take place. They have honed the skills to know when, and under what circumstances, to continue reunification efforts and when other avenues need to be pursued to achieve permanency for children.

Competency across all these information and skills sets comes with experience. To gain that experience, caseworkers need good supervision, opportunities for professional development, manageable caseloads, and compensation and career paths that reflect the value of the work. Boards have interacted with foster care workers throughout Michigan who are committed professionals and whose work in support of children and families exemplifies the highest standards of casework. However, boards have also seen far too many examples where caseworker turnover, case reassignment, or apparent lack of follow through by the caseworker, are core reasons for cases not moving in a timely manner toward permanency.

In the FCRB annual report for 2001, the issue of a stable workforce was raised. That report framed the scope of the problem and pointed to several issues that result from caseworker turnover. A survey done by the Michigan Federation of Private Child and Family Agencies found that, in a one-year period, over 40 percent of the private agency foster care workers had left their positions. In a follow-up survey of workers who were leaving their positions, 70 percent identified salary, 41 percent identified the hours, and 36 percent identified workload stress and caseload size, as reasons for leaving.

There are several issues that result from caseworker turnover. The responsibility for the casework of a departing worker must be borne by those who stay, resulting in caseload ratios that may become unmanageable. Delays may occur as new workers are hired and need time for training and acclimation to the job. Court hearings may either be delayed or the review function of the court can be compromised while a new worker becomes fully conversant with the case. The Child and Family Services Review of Michigan's child welfare services system noted that the primary reason foster children were not visited by their workers while they were in care was high caseworker turnover. Each of these issues may affect the quality of services provided, the safety and well-being of the child, and the timeliness of permanency decisions.

Progress on the Issues: In 2001, the FCRB made recommendations to increase the per diem paid to private agencies for the expressed purpose of increasing salaries for direct service caseworkers; to increase the use of paraprofessionals to support caseworkers; and to begin a process to address the issues surrounding worker stress. Efforts are ongoing to address issues surrounding worker stress. Some progress has been made relative to caseload ratios of DHS foster care workers. However, minimal progress has been made on the recommendations to increase salaries of private agency workers or to provide assistance through paraprofessional support.

- ▶ In response to the findings of a workload study done by the Children's Research Center of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency⁴, several steps were taken to improve the caseload ratios for foster care direct service providers. The study, based on 1999 case load numbers, determined that DHS had 56 percent of the staff required to meet minimal time standards to effectively perform casework responsibilities. Through the reallocation of staff positions from prevention and juvenile justice and the redefinition of supervision responsibilities, 191 foster care direct service providers were added statewide. This raised the percentage from 56 percent to 80 percent of the staff needed to meet minimal time standards.

Although the final DHS budget for FY 05 maintains the FY 04 caseload ratios, the DHS has included in its Program Improvement Plan (established as a result of the Child and Family Services Review) the intent to request additional staff to reach the 100 percent staffing needed to meet the minimal time standard for effective casework.

- ▶ DHS established a statewide policy to limit caseloads by requiring counties to purchase foster care supervision from private agencies when caseload ratios reach the level of 17 to 1. However there were no concomitant standards set for the private agencies. The private agencies supervise approximately 60 percent of licensed non-relative placements in the state.
- ▶ The fiscal year 2004-05 DHS budget provided approximately \$7 million for a 3 percent rate increase for private agency adoption, foster care, and residential agencies and a 1 percent increase for foster parents and adoption subsidies.

CASELOAD AND STAFF TURNOVER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that the Michigan legislative committees pertaining to children and families review the 2002 workload study completed by the Children's Research Center of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency to determine the number of caseworkers required for effective casework and to ensure that adequate funding to meet these goals is appropriated.
2. We recommend that Michigan's executive and legislative branches explore ways to bring private agency salaries in line with the salaries of DHS employees.
3. We recommend that DHS and private child welfare leadership develop procedures to learn from line caseworkers about the issues that contribute to worker stress and then implement effective solutions.
4. We recommend that Michigan's legislature make the care of abused and neglected children an annual legislative priority and that the funding levels needed for reasonable caseloads and services be attended to even in the environment of diminished resources and competing interests.

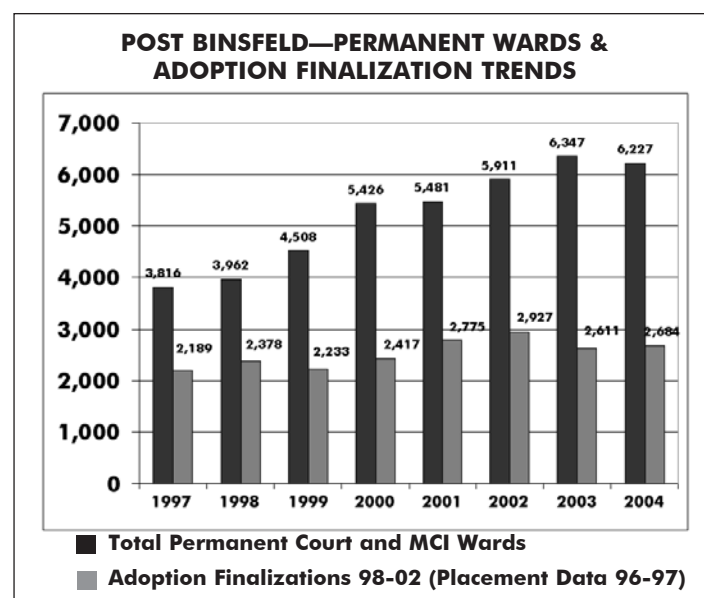
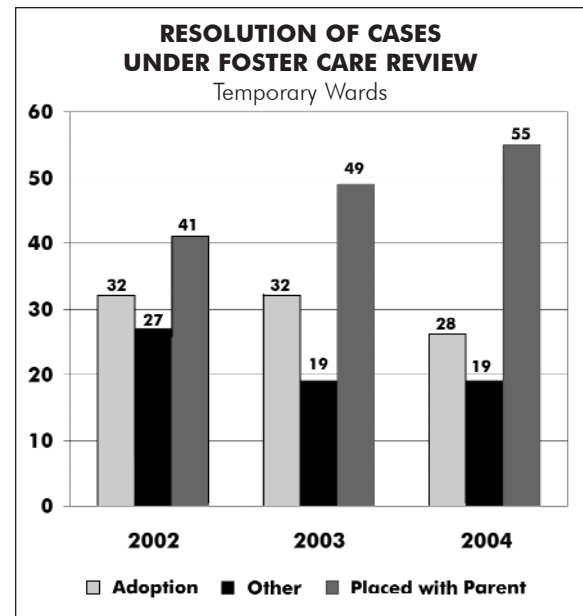
⁴ Foster care and CPS workload studies, presented to FIA by NCCD/CRC, January 16, 2002.

PERMANENT WARDS—PERMANENCY PLANNING & AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Statement of the Issues: A primary goal in child welfare cases is to establish a safe permanent home for children who have been removed from their homes as a result of abuse and neglect. The first priority is always to address the issues that resulted in the removal of the children from their home and to provide the services and supports so that they can be reunified with their parents. While on a year-to-year basis, as the chart indicates, a high percentage of children do return home, there is a significant number of cases each year in which termination of parental rights occurs and children become permanent wards of the state until a permanency plan is established. An ongoing concern of FCRB is that in recent years there has been a rather dramatic increase in the number of children who have become permanent wards of the state, but have not been afforded a permanency plan.

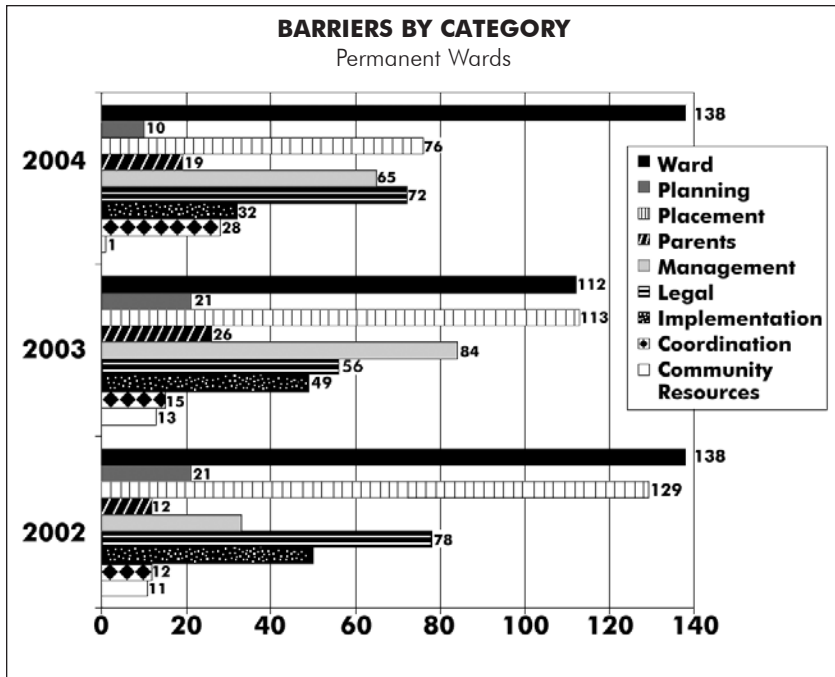
In 1997, legislation was passed which made significant changes in Michigan's child welfare law. The changes, which flowed from former Lieutenant Governor Connie Binsfeld's Commission on Children, were an effort to address concerns related to how the child welfare services system and the courts handle child abuse and neglect cases. While a wide range of issues were covered, an overarching value which drove many of the recommendations was that children have a right to a responsive system that makes permanency decisions in a timely manner. The legislation clarified and tightened timelines in court procedures; put measures in place to reduce the number of continuances and adjournments; clarified when "reasonable efforts" toward reunification should be made; and conversely, when court intervention should begin with a presumption that the termination of parental rights is in the best interests of the child.

The legislation, in combination with the increased attention it brought to child welfare issues, has had an impact on the number of children achieving permanency through adoption. There were 2,189 children placed for adoption in 1996 and 2,684 adoptions finalized in 2004, a 23 percent increase.⁵ At the same time, as the chart indicates, the number of children who are permanent wards of the state at any given time has increased significantly since the changes in law. In 1996, there were 3,816 permanent wards and by 2004 that number had increased to 6,227, an increase of 63 percent.



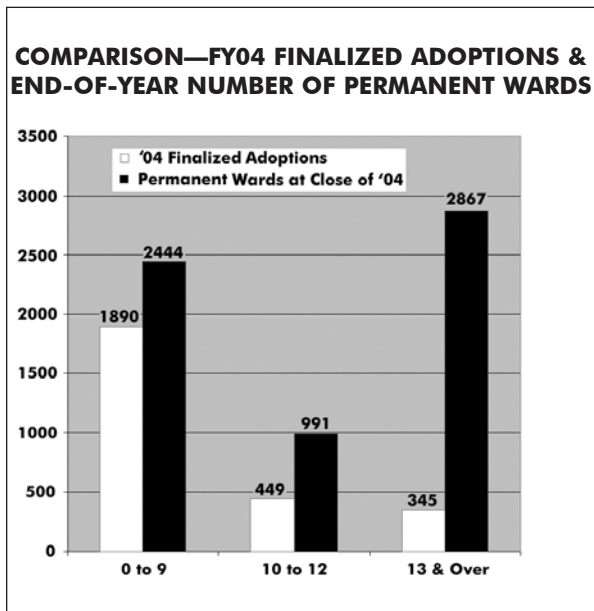
⁵ Finalization numbers for 1996 were not available. The 29 percent increase is calculated using the number of FY02 adoption finalizations compared to the FY96 placements for adoption. The increase would be higher if finalization numbers could be used for both years.

Clearly, the Binsfeld legislation's increased emphasis on conducting hearings and making permanency decisions in a timely manner has had an impact on the number of children in care who are permanent wards of the state. When necessary, decisions are being made to terminate parental rights. The result for too many children, however, is that termination of parental rights has not been followed with a permanent placement plan.



There are a variety of reasons why adoptions and other permanency plans have not been able to stay apace with the number of children who are permanent state wards. In reviewing foster care cases of permanent wards, the FCRB has collected data on barriers to permanency. Consistently, as the chart indicates, the two barriers most often cited are issues related to the placement and those related to the child. Placement is viewed as a barrier in circumstances such as when the child has special needs that are not being met in the present placement, or the agency is having problems locating a program to address the youth's special needs, which, when left unresolved, jeopardize the placement. A barrier is attributed to the child (ward) for reasons such as when there have

been behavioral issues which result in adoption placement disruptions, or when an older child is unwilling to agree to a proposed permanency plan.



As noted by the FCRB Advisory Committee, in some cases, there isn't a smooth transition of responsibilities from the foster care worker to the adoption worker, which can cause unnecessary delays even when an adoptive home has been identified.

FCRB boards have also noted that the agency staff most responsible for a permanency plan is not always the staff present at post termination and permanency planning reviews. In many instances, foster care staff have continued to attend, but adoption staff have not.

Another issue is that, as children get older, it is more and more difficult to find adoptive homes. Of the 2,684 adoptions finalized for state wards in fiscal year 04, over 70 percent (1,890) were for children 0 to 9 years of age. Finalized adoptions for children 13 years of age or older comprised about 13 percent (345) of the total. At the close of that same 04 fiscal year, 39 percent (2,444) of the permanent wards were in the 0 to 9 age range, while 45 percent (2,867) were 13 years of age or older.

Michigan has devoted considerable attention to issues surrounding children who have been abused and neglected and their right to a safe and permanent home setting. While progress has been made on several fronts, the issues related to children who are permanent wards need continued attention.

Progress on the Issues: There are several efforts ongoing in Michigan related to permanent wards. Initiatives focus on efforts to increase the permanency options and to provide support for children.

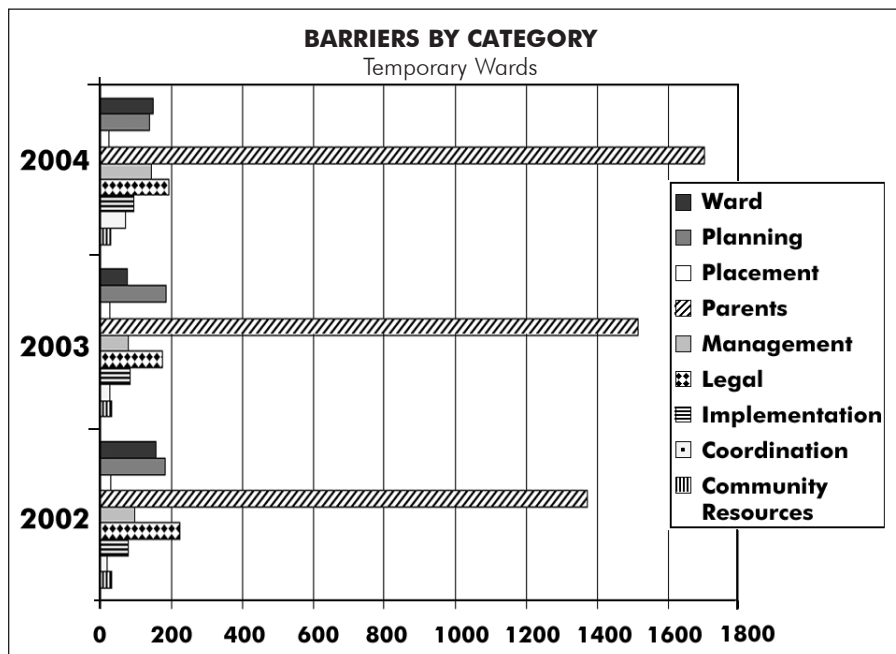
- ▶ **Aging Out.** A significant number of children are aging out of the foster care system without benefit of a permanency placement, such as adoption or guardianship. There are several efforts underway to increase support for young people as they make the transition to adulthood.
 - In November 2004, the Michigan Supreme Court launched the Children's Community Services Network. This is an effort to match community volunteers with children in the foster care system with an emphasis on providing mentoring and support for older children.
 - As part of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, efforts are underway in Wayne County and a multi-county area in northwestern lower Michigan to develop a broader system of support for children aging out of the foster care system. The initiative provides targeted financial support for young people for costs related to establishing an independent living situation.
 - The Department of Labor and Economic Growth and DHS received a Foster Youth Demonstration Grant to provide comprehensive services to youth that age out of the child welfare system. The project is targeted to youth in Wayne County.
 - DHS is receiving technical assistance from the National Resource Center on Youth Development to improve policy and practice for youth in foster care and youth exiting the system.
- ▶ **Adoption Initiatives.** The Dave Thomas Foundation is currently funding two initiatives in Michigan to promote individualized recruitment of adoptive homes. These efforts are designed to find adoptive homes for children who have been waiting for an adoptive home for an extended period of time. The project looks at the needs and interests of children and seeks to recruit an adoptive home where appropriate support can be provided.
- ▶ **Adoption Day.** DHS, the Michigan Supreme Court, and local courts throughout Michigan have conducted a statewide Adoption Day in each of the past two years, which have been the largest in the country. In addition to celebrating the adoptions that take place, the adoption days have been an opportunity to heighten the awareness of the number of children awaiting adoption.
- ▶ **Legislation.** Legislation was passed in 2004 to clarify where adoption petitions are filed and who is provided notice to adoption proceedings. These changes were enacted to address delays in adoption proceedings.

- **Data Tracking.** The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) will begin to track adoption disruptions and dissolutions. This effort will clarify the scope of the problem and begin to identify the kinds of supports that adoptive families need to avoid disruptions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PERMANENT WARDS

1. We recommend that DHS submit a request for legislation that would require all court hearings subsequent to termination of parental rights include a review of the permanency planning goal.
2. We recommend that the State Court Administrative Office develop best practice strategies to ensure that the primary child welfare worker for permanency planning hearings attend all post-termination hearings.
3. We recommend that DHS review adoption policy and establish procedures to ensure that workers effectively monitor permanent wards so that barriers to permanency are addressed.
4. We recommend that DHS and child placing agencies review the procedures for transitioning cases from foster care to adoption services to ensure that all required information is transferred within required time frames.

MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE— BARRIERS TO REUNIFICATION



A consistent theme in the data collected by FCRB over the years is that, by far, parental issues are the most prevalent barrier to reunification for children in foster care. As the chart indicates, parental issues outnumber the total of all other issues identified for temporary wards for each of the past three years. Three of the most troublesome issues attributed as parental barriers are substance abuse, mental health issues, and domestic violence.

Substance abuse: Based on a recent sampling of foster care cases, the DHS estimates that parental substance abuse is a factor in as many as 65 percent of all cases where children have been removed from their homes. There are several challenges in effectively addressing a parental substance abuse issue in the context of a child protection case:

- ▶ A threshold issue is that the problem needs to be identified early on so that the matter can be appropriately incorporated into the case service plan. Too often, a family can come to the attention of Children's Protective Services for reasons other than the substance abuse. The issue can be missed initially, discovered later in the case, resulting in unnecessary delays in treatment.
- ▶ The successful treatment of substance abuse is a process that often involves relapses and can require time that does not conform well to the timelines of a child protective proceeding.
- ▶ Substance abuse services are in high demand for several different populations. The resulting competing demands can create challenges in ensuring that a local jurisdiction can link timely assessment and services to parents involved in child protective proceedings.
- ▶ Effective response to parental substance abuse requires a high degree of cross-system work involving the court, foster care providers, substance abuse and other service providers, and the attorneys representing all parties in the case. While more attention is being given to the need for such cross-system work, not all communities have developed the necessary agreements and protocols to ensure the level of services necessary to effectively address the issue.

Mental Health: Parental emotional disorders and mental illness are sources of delay in permanency planning for children in care. Delays occur when parental mental health issues are not assessed and accurately diagnosed early on in the child protection case. Without early diagnosis, service plans may be established that do not address the parents' needs or contain unrealistic goals or expectations.

Beyond the issue of early and accurate assessment is the matter of the availability of mental health services. As with both domestic violence and substance abuse, there are excellent services and service providers in Michigan who are providing therapy for parents involved with child protection cases. However, services are not always readily available. The issue becomes more complex when parents are dually diagnosed with mental health challenges and substance abuse.

Another issue identified by FCRB is that there appears to be a need for better cross-system understanding of the tight timelines of a child protection case.

Domestic Violence: One of the more difficult issues faced by protective services, law enforcement, and foster care is to balance the rights of a victim of domestic violence with safety and protection concerns for the children.

Considerable attention has been given to the question of when, and under what circumstances, a report to Children's Protective Services should be made when police answer a domestic violence call with children in the home. On one hand, a woman who has been a victim of domestic violence should not be re-victimized by having her children removed from her care. At the same time, when children have been harmed in the context of domestic violence or are not being protected, decisions must be made to address the children's safety and well-being.

Protective services and foster care workers are often faced with difficult decisions in these cases. Families need services to address the issue of domestic violence. While excellent services and supports exist, the availability of such services is not consistent across the state. As a result, protective services staff can be faced with deciding whether or not to remove children from their home based on whether the community has an adequate system of support for victims of domestic violence.

For foster care workers working with victims, the challenges involved in creating a safe environment for children can be complex. The following quote captures some of these difficulties.

*"If, for example, a woman considers a separation from her partner to protect herself and her children, where will she find housing and money to feed her family? What will happen to her children's health insurance if she leaves? Who will baby-sit for the children when she has to go to work and her partner is no longer there? This second set of factors, or life-generated risks, enters into each battered woman's calculation of her children's safety. Deciding to leave her relationship does not guarantee the elimination of these risks: in fact, it may bring them to the fore."*⁶

Though these issues can be overcome, they present a special set of challenges for foster care workers working on reunification plans with victims of domestic violence.

Progress on the Issues: Issues related to parental substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence have all been given considerable attention.

- ▶ **Parental Substance Abuse and Child Welfare.** Michigan has established an interdepartmental team on the substance abuse issues in the context of child protection proceedings. The team has conducted several technical assistance days and supported community forums; it has developed a variety of resources to assist communities to better address parental substance abuse in child protection cases.
- ▶ **Family Treatment Drug Courts.** Several jurisdictions in Michigan have established Family Treatment Drug Courts, which are an effort to address parental substance abuse in the context of child protective proceedings in a timely and effective way.

⁶ Effective Intervention In Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice; Recommendations from the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court judges Family Violence Department; First Printing 1999.

- ▶ **Domestic Violence and Law Enforcement.** The Governor's Task Force on Children Justice established a sub-committee to look at issues related to domestic violence when there are children in the home. The work of this group has resulted in a protocol for law enforcement to help guide decisions on making a protective services referral when receiving domestic violence calls. The sub-committee has also sponsored focus groups on the issues and has made a set of recommendations to improve understanding and response across systems.
- ▶ **Domestic Violence and Child Welfare.** The Michigan Domestic Violence and Treatment Board has worked closely with DHS' Families First initiative to integrate treatment of domestic violence issues into the array of Families First services.

BARRIERS TO REUNIFICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that DHS review the training and professional development opportunities for both public and private child welfare staff and that the training include the following:⁷
 - ▶ How to recognize the primary indicators of mental illness and emotional disorders, and the utility and side effects of often-prescribed medications.
 - ▶ Having realistic expectations for the treatment of mental illness and emotional disorders and to be aware of community treatment resources for use in case planning.
 - ▶ Understanding the effects of parental mental illness or emotional problems on child development and behavior, and accurately assessing the risk to a child in the primary care of the emotionally disturbed/mentally ill parent.
 - ▶ How to access and use family preservation services and community-based resources in case plans to help parents maintain primary responsibility for their children.
2. We recommend that the State continue the efforts of the State Interdisciplinary Team on Child Welfare and Substance Abuse by:
 - ▶ DHS, the Department of Community Health (DCH), and SCAO promoting Family Drug Treatment Courts and providing support and technical assistance for jurisdictions interested in developing such courts.
 - ▶ DHS and DCH developing a resource that describes sources of support for substance abuse services in child welfare cases and providing guidance to communities seeking funding.
 - ▶ Integrating emerging substance abuse issues, such as Methamphetamine, into CWI training and other professional development provided by DHS and private agencies.

⁷ Topics identified from training offered by New Partnership for Children and Families; Parental Mental Health and Child Welfare Practice; University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

FOSTER PARENT APPEALS OF DECISIONS TO MOVE CHILDREN—FCRB REVIEWS

In 1997, Michigan enacted changes in child welfare law to allow foster parents to appeal a decision when DHS decides to remove a child from a foster care placement. Michigan's Foster Care Review Boards have been given the responsibility for the first level of appeal. A panel of at least three FCRB members is convened to hear from both the foster parents and DHS or private agency staff. The panel then decides whether they agree with the agency decision to move the child or whether they agree with the foster parents. If FCRB agrees with the agency, the process ends with that decision. If FCRB agrees with the foster parents, the matter is set for a hearing before a judge/referee, or, if the child is a state ward, the subsequent review is done by the Michigan Children's Institute (MCI).

During Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004 there were a total of 314 requests for review to the Foster Care Review Board Program from foster parents. Those requests resulted in 201 board appeal hearings. Of the 201 appeal hearings, boards supported foster parents 85 times (42 percent) and agencies 116 times (58 percent). The two tables below show the decisions for each fiscal year and the final decisions (by either the Court or MCI) when FCRB had agreed with the foster parents at the initial review.

(Toll-free number for foster parent appeals 1-888-866-6566)

2003/2004 Foster Parent Appeal Outcomes				
	Support Foster Parents¹		Support Agency	
	FY2003	FY2004	FY2003	FY2004
Family Independence Agency (name change to DHS became effective 3/05)	25	23	30	25
Purchase of Service Agencies	19	18	32	29
TOTAL	44	41	62	54

Appeals Where FCRB Support Foster Parents—Final Outcomes						
	Support Foster Parents		Support Agency		Unknown Outcomes	
	FY2003	FY2004	FY2003	FY2004	FY2003	FY2004
Court Decisions	11	10	6	8	8	7
MCI Decisions	9	7	8	6	1	2
No Hearing Held²					1	1
TOTAL	20	17	14	14	10	10

¹ Must be reviewed subsequently by Court or MCI superintendent.

² No follow-up court hearing/MCI review needed due to foster parents and agency reaching agreement.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DIVISION, MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT, STATE COURT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE (2003/2004)

As of December 2004, there were over 19,000 children in foster care in Michigan due to abuse or neglect. To assist courts with addressing the needs of these children and families in the child welfare system, the Child Welfare Services Division (CWS) was created within the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) in 2003. The Division helps courts expedite permanency for children through programs such as the Court Improvement Program (CIP) and the Foster Care Review Board Program (FCRB). CWS provides technical assistance to the Judiciary on several child welfare matters including case flow management, the special dockets that track children who are missing from their foster care placements, and issues arising from recent federal reviews. CWS serves as the Supreme Court's child welfare liaison to the Michigan Department of Human Services and is involved in several state child welfare initiatives.

Federal Reviews

In September 2002, Michigan participated in the Child and Family Services Review. The review assessed the state's performance on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being, as well as seven systemic factors. In March 2004, Michigan also underwent a federal audit regarding administration of the Title IV-E Program. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act provides states with federal funding to pay for foster care programs for abused or neglected children. In 2003, Michigan received approximately \$248 million dollars in Title IV-E funds, with similar amounts in 2004. Michigan failed both audits and could lose millions of dollars in foster care funding if it does not pass the next round of reviews.

In 2003, CWS, DHS (known at the time as FIA), and the courts formed a workgroup to focus on Michigan's compliance with Title IV-E. Throughout 2003, CWS maintained regular contact with the Judiciary and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration of Children and Families, which conducted both reviews. During 2004, CWS took an even more active role and began collaborating regularly with DHS regarding the Program Improvement Plans for both reviews. Since 2004, CWS has been conducting Title IV-E training throughout the state to address the necessary requirements for federal funding. CWS has also been meeting regularly with DHS regarding the pending appeal, which was filed for cases determined to be ineligible for Title IV-E funding.

In the wake of the federal reviews, CWS convened a legislative workgroup in April 2004 to address aspects of the Michigan law that could potentially jeopardize Michigan's federal funding. On June 22, 2004, former Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Maura Corrigan and Justice Elizabeth Weaver, Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice, appeared before the House and Senate Judiciary Committees to present an overview of the proposals recommended by the workgroup and highlight the significance of the proposed legislation. The Justices requested that legislation be drafted and enacted by December 2004. Senate Bills 1440, 1441, and 1444 and House Bill 6310 were signed

into law by Governor Jennifer Granholm and became effective December 28, 2004. The new legislation includes several provisions from the Title IV-E regulations.

Court Improvement Program

In child protective cases, the goal is to either reunite the child with the family or find the child another permanent home. If courts are not functioning properly, children languish in the system. To be effective, courts must review cases in a timely and comprehensive manner and must appoint skilled attorneys to represent all parties. In accordance with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, the United States Congress appropriated funds to 48 state judicial systems to improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases. Under this grant, Michigan is required to assess its child protection process, identify obstacles to timely permanent placements, and develop and implement court improvement plans. Accordingly, in 1995, SCAO began operating the Court Improvement Program (CIP).

CIP's initial assessment of the courts was completed in 1997. A reassessment, which includes review of court files and interviews with stakeholders, including the FCRB, began in 2003 and will be completed in June, 2005.

During the past few years, CIP has overseen a number of projects to improve the court's handling of child welfare cases, including the Permanency Planning Mediation Project, the Absent Parent Protocol, and Family Treatment Drug Courts. The Michigan Supreme Court and CWS have formed work groups to address key issues such as barriers to adoption, duties of the lawyer-guardian ad litem, foster care licensing, and the judiciary's compliance with federal regulations that affect funding.

Permanency Planning Mediation (PPMP)

Three recommendations from the Michigan CIP Assessment Report suggested that SCAO explore the use of alternative dispute resolution methods in child protective proceedings. Beginning in March 1998, a Permanency Planning Mediation Program (PPMP) was piloted with CIP funds.

PPMP has had pilot projects in eight sites. An additional program was initiated in Wayne County that was funded through CIP, but not included in the original pilot.

PPMP tests the use of collaborative dispute resolution at the various stages of child protective proceedings and examines whether mediation helps children in foster care achieve permanency. Since late 1998, over 500 cases have been mediated. In 2003, 106 child protection cases were mediated, down from 127 the prior year, with one center accounting for almost half (52) of the cases.

Although reports have indicated judicial support and generally high satisfaction from the participants in mediation, the number of referrals has decreased. In addition, many of the courts have been unable to consider long term funding for the centers, due to decreased funding of their own. Due to these changes in the PPMP, only one site, the Northern Mediation Center, has remained funded. Additional funding sources are being sought to continue services through the other centers.

Absent Parent Protocol

The Absent Parent Protocol was developed in 2003 to address the high number of child protection cases where only one parent is involved in the court proceedings. In 2004, the Protocol, which was developed through collaboration with the Michigan Judicial Institute (MJI), CWS, and the Friend of the Court Bureau, was updated to clarify issues related to the definition of legal fathers and to formalize a new partnership with the Office of Child Support (OCS). The partnership with OCS will improve the ability of foster care and protective services staff to locate absent parents. The updated protocol will be distributed to courts and service providers throughout Michigan, with technical assistance available through CWS for implementation of the protocol.

Family Drug Treatment Courts

Parental substance abuse has long been acknowledged as either the primary reason or significant contributing factor in a high percentage of child welfare cases that come before the courts. According to research compiled by the Child Welfare League, eighty-five percent of states listed poverty and substance abuse as the top problems in their child protection caseload. Children with substance abusing parents are four times more likely to be neglected than children whose parents are not abusers. Children whose families do not receive appropriate treatment are more likely to remain in foster care longer and more likely to reenter.

In 2004, staff from the Trial Court Services of SCAO and CWS worked with a state level inter-departmental team in efforts to improve the quality and availability of substance abuse services for parents who are involved with the courts because of child abuse or neglect. In Michigan, two Family Drug Treatment Courts are operational and two more are receiving technical assistance from CWS, while in the planning stages. In 2005, SCAO/CWS staff will assemble and disseminate a set of resource materials to assist jurisdictions in planning and implementing Family Drug Treatment Courts.

Appointed Legal Counsel

The CFSR stakeholder interviews revealed that certain court hearings were not heard timely because too many continuances were granted. It was noted that some delays were attributable, in part, to consensual agreements by attorneys to waive the hearings. It was also noted by the FCRB that children were not always seen by their court appointed counsel, Lawyer Guardian ad Litem (L-GAL), as statutorily required and that many of the children in child protection proceedings were not adequately represented.

A Michigan Supreme Court-Family Independence Agency work group also found that not only did L-GALs often fail to visit their clients, but that they often substituted for one another at hearings, so that the attorney who appeared at the hearing was not always familiar with the child's case.

In response, the State Court Administrative Office issued a directive on September 26, 2003, which amended the SCAO form (Order Appointing Attorney/Guardian ad Litem/Lawyer Guardian ad Litem) and created an Affidavit of Service Performed. The

new forms specifically direct the L-GAL to meet with the child and to complete an affidavit verifying completion of the statutory requirements as outlined in the child welfare legislation, which was enacted in 1998.

On October 29, 2003, the State Court Administrative Office promulgated a policy which allows local panels of the Foster Care Review Board to report attorney misconduct to SCAO. Grounds for referring an attorney may include the lawyer's "failure to conduct an independent investigation into the facts of a particular case resulting in prejudice to the child's legal interest," as well as the failure to meet with the child. The policy requires that the request for investigation first be referred to the Director of Child Welfare Services and then on to the State Court Administrator for review, if it is determined to have merit.

L-GAL Training

An independent study conducted by the American Bar Association in November 2002, found standard training was not provided following the 1998 enactment of Michigan's L-GAL statute. The ABA study also found that Michigan's L-GALs were not carrying out their duties as prescribed by state law and revealed that a lack of training potentially leads to inconsistent interpretations of the L-GAL's duties and responsibilities.

In 2003, SCAO, MJI, and the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice created a protocol detailing the powers and duties of L-GALs who represent children in child protection proceedings. The protocol was distributed to all family divisions of circuit court and is available on the MJI portion of the Michigan Supreme Courts website at <http://courts.michigan.gov/mji/resources/lgal/LGALprotocol.htm>.

A curriculum was developed, based upon the protocol, and training began in 2004 with funds generously provided through the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice.

From May to September, 2004, 344 L-GALs were trained in 12 different locations. In addition to the core curriculum, the L-GAL curriculum includes special topics, such as the Absent Parent Protocol and Title IV-E regulations. Training, at this time, is scheduled through 2006.

Children Absent Without Legal Permission

In 2002, the Supreme Court directed all Michigan circuit courts to develop special dockets to review cases in which foster children are missing from their court-ordered placements or are absent without legal permission (AWOLP). The courts submitted their plans to SCAO by February 1, 2003 and began holding special hearings. In 2003, regular meetings began between the Chief Justice and chief judges of the circuit courts. In late 2003 and throughout 2004, CWS became involved to monitor progress in finding AWOLP children. In 2003, approximately 73 percent of those children were located; in 2004, this increased to 79 percent.

Michigan Adoption Day

In 2004, the Michigan Supreme Court co-sponsored the second Michigan Adoption Day to educate the public about the adoption process and to draw attention to the thousands of children awaiting permanent homes. Like the first Adoption Day, according

to National Adoption Day organizers, Michigan's event was the largest Adoption Day in the nation. On November 24, 2004, 42 counties participated in the event and 339 children were adopted; an increase from 35 counties and 250 adoptions in 2003. The adoption ceremonies included parties for the adopted children and their families, gifts for the children, and informational sessions for the public.

As of December 31, 2004, there were 12,644 children who were temporary court wards in Michigan—children who are made wards of the court as a result of child protective proceedings. As of the same date, there were 19,314 children in foster care in Michigan. For most children in foster care, the goal is returning to a safe and stable home. But, according to DHS, a significant number of children—4,445 as of December 31, 2004—are permanent court wards with a goal of adoption. Unfortunately, many of these children are older and may find themselves aging out of the system without a permanent home or sufficient support system. To assist the aging out population, the Michigan Supreme Court, on Adoption Day 2004, unveiled the Children's Community Support Network (CCSN).

Children's Community Support Network

As of September 30, 2004, 2981 children aged 16 and older were in foster care. Rather than adoption, most of these children will simply age out of the foster care system, with little or no financial or emotional support, since they are without a permanent placement and cannot be returned home. To address this tragic problem, former Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, Maura D. Corrigan, appointed Randall Wilger, as her special assistant on volunteerism to develop the Children's Community Support Network (CCSN). Mr. Wilger, a former twelve year member of the Foster Care Review Board and Chair of its Advisory Committee, is now the CCSN project coordinator.

The overall mission of CCSN is to help children and young adults who are, or were court wards, become productive and responsible adults by creating a network of community support. This network gives people an opportunity to assist foster children and youth through volunteer service, such as mentoring. CCSN identifies volunteers and matches them with existing organizations, including DHS, private child service organizations and the courts. More information about CCSN is available on the Court's website at <http://courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/ccsn/index.htm>.

SUMMARY

Recommendations from the FCRB have played a significant role in shaping the activities of the Child Welfare Services Division. As this collaborative relationship develops, CWS will continue to call upon the FCRB to assist with its initiatives.

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CHILD WELFARE SERVICES AND FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD STAFF

Kathryne A. O'Grady is Director of Child Welfare Services for the State Court Administrative Office. She has been involved with child welfare law for over 20 years. Formerly, Ms. O'Grady was a juvenile section referee for the Third Judicial Circuit Family Division, the program manager for the Michigan Child Welfare Law Resource Center at the University of Michigan Law School, and a Wayne County assistant prosecutor and defense attorney specializing in juvenile and child welfare law. She is the founding editor of the Michigan Child Welfare Law Journal and has taught several undergraduate and graduate courses, including juvenile law, criminal law, and civil rights and liberties. She is the former chairperson of the Children's Law Section and former member of the executive council of the Referees Association of Michigan. In addition to the Michigan Judicial Institute, Ms. O'Grady has spoken before such groups as the Michigan Probate Judges Association and the Child Welfare Institute of the Department of Human Services.

Michael D. Foley is the Assistant Director of Child Welfare Services of the State Court Administrative Office and statewide Manager of Michigan's Foster Care Review Program. His prior experience includes having been the Executive Director of Children's Charter of the Courts of Michigan, a statewide child advocacy organization involved in a variety of issues related to children and Michigan's court systems. He has been Michigan's State Leader for Healthy Families America, an initiative to assist communities in the development of high quality services for families with children 0 to 5 years of age. Mr. Foley has managed several state-level child and family initiatives, including former Lieutenant Governor Connie Binsfeld's Commission on Adoption Issues and a two-year initiative of the State Bar on children in the courts.

Brenda Baker-Mbacke has been a Program Representative for the Foster Care Review Board Program since 1995 and is located in the Detroit office where she covers six counties. Having worked in private agencies for the previous nineteen years, Ms. Baker-Mbacke's professional experience includes executive administration, training, consulting, and foster parent licensing. She attended Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan, where she earned both an M.A. in Human Resource Management and a B.S.W. in Social Work. Ms. Baker-Mbacke is a long-standing member of the National Association of Black Social Workers and has been active on the local, state, and national levels.

In addition, Ms. Baker-Mbacke is currently President-Elect for the Greater Detroit Association of Black Social Workers. She is also a member of the Order of the Eastern star and is the Worthy Matron of Nefertiti Chapter #385 affiliated with Modern Free, Inc.

Debra Kailie has been with the Foster Care Review Board since 2004. She is the Program Representative for the Lansing office and covers seventeen counties and five boards. Ms. Kailie has an extensive career with the Department of Human Services which covers a twenty-five year period and an additional five years with the Michigan Legislature. Ms. Kailie has experience in public assistance programs and Children's Protective Services. While working in the Legislature, Ms. Kailie was a policy analyst for family and children's issues. Ms. Kailie holds a B.A. degree from Wayne State University, a M.S.W. from Eastern Michigan University and an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Destiny School of Ministry.

James Novell has been a Program Representative with the Foster Care Review Board Program since March 1998. Prior to that, he had twenty plus years working in private child welfare and mental health agencies as a caseworker, therapist, clinical supervisor, and executive administrator. Mr. Novell works in the Detroit office where he covers eight of the Wayne County Foster Care Review Boards. He has a Master's Degree in Social Work from Michigan State University.

Gayle Robbert has been with the Foster Care Review Board program since August 2000 and is a Program Representative for the Lansing office covering eleven counties and six Boards. Ms. Robbert has worked in child welfare since 1974 for both public and private agencies and the Kent County Circuit Court. Ms. Robbert has extensive experience in the areas of foster care and adoption. Ms. Robbert holds a B.A. degree from Calvin College in Grand Rapids and M.A. degree from Ohio State University.

Kevin C. Sherman began his child welfare career in 1979, starting as a juvenile probation officer for two northern counties in Michigan. For the next eight years, Mr. Sherman took on additional duties within the courts as family counselor, non-attorney referee, in-home counselor, and as the Juvenile Court Administrator for Antrim County. He transferred to Antrim County Family Independence Agency and for the next eleven years worked in four northern counties as a children's foster care worker, children's protective services worker, and adult services worker prior to accepting a program manager position in the Grand Traverse County FIA. In March of 1998, Mr. Sherman became a member of the Michigan Foster Care Review Board Program and works in the Gaylord office, which covers forty-eight counties and five boards.

In addition to the above employment, Mr. Sherman is also a member of the Michigan Army National Guard where he serves as Provost Marshal for Camp Grayling Maneuver Training Center. He is also a certified police officer here in Michigan, and in his spare time he officiates basketball with his daughters. Mr. Sherman is also a Michigan Make A Wish volunteer and is involved with Special Olympics, Roscommon Post of the American Legion, and the Knights of Columbus.



**Michigan Supreme Court
State Court Administrative Office
Child Welfare Services Division
FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD PROGRAM**

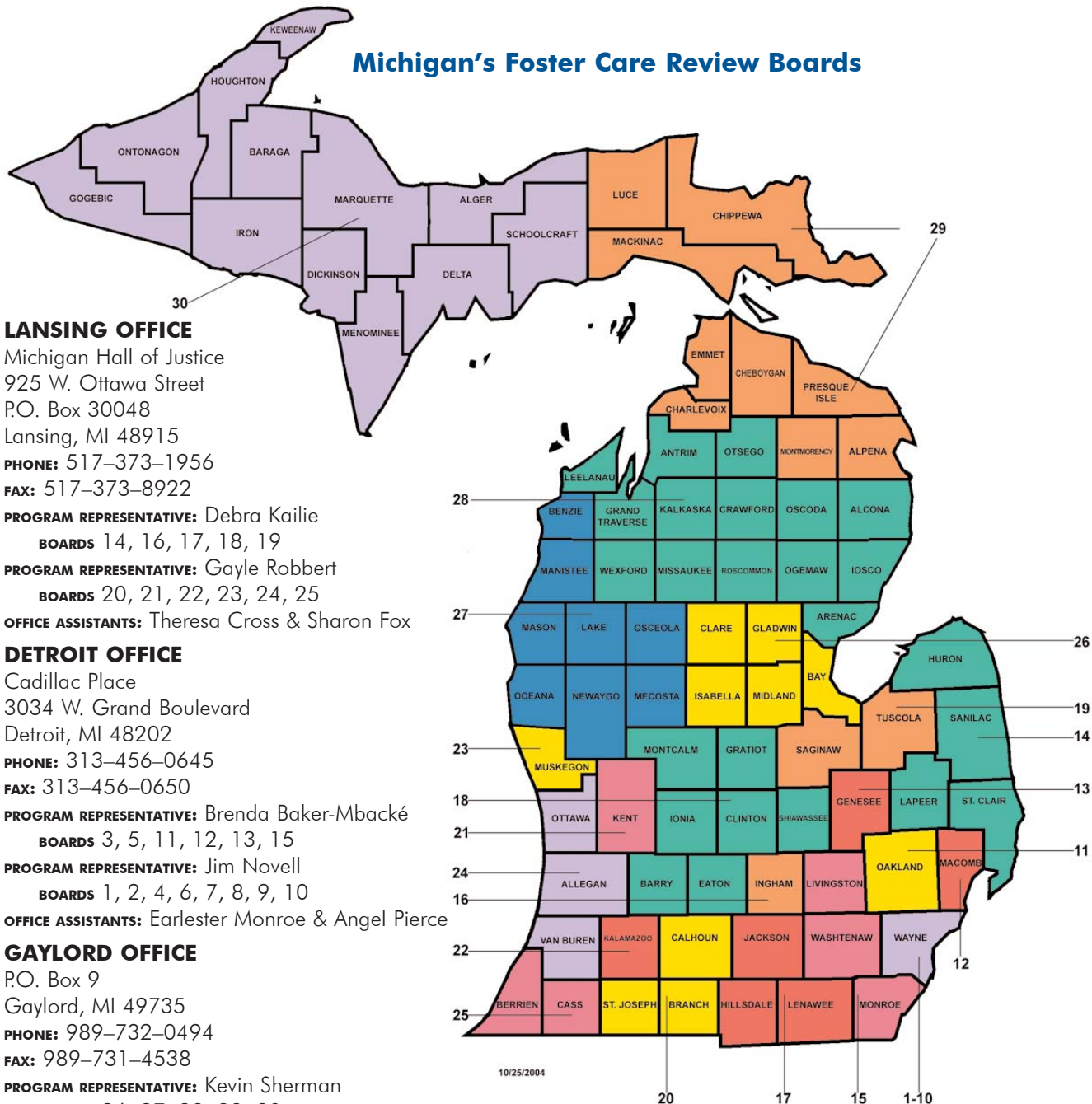
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<http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/services/cws/cws.htm>

Michigan's Foster Care Review Boards



Data and issues are derived from the 5,500 reviews by FCRB in FY 2003 and 2004.

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